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A

SERMON

Preach'd before the

SOCIETIES

F O R

Reformation of Manners.





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Reformation of Manners,

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SALTERS-HALL,

JULY 1st. 1717.

By DANIEL MAYO, M. A.

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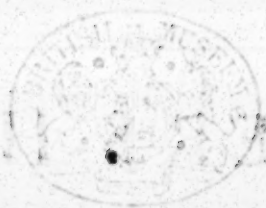
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JAMES V. 19, 20.

Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one Convert him; let him know that he which converteth the Sinner from the error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins.

IT may afford great Pleasure to pious Minds, to reflect upon the Laudable Zeal with which several Religious Societies were formed some Years ago, in these Great and Populous Cities, as a good Example, which had its Influence upon other parts of the Island, and in Foreign Countrys; and with what Regularity and good Success those for *Reformation of Manners* in particular have been managed: As also upon the many excellent Sermons that have been delivered from the Pulpit and Press, for your Assistance and Direction in your Noble Designs and Undertakings. And it is also a very serious if not melancholly Consideration, that so many worthy Persons that were very Active and Zealous in their Endeavours to Reform a Wicked and Profligate Age and Generation, are removed out of this World, in which they were for a Time as Burning and Shining Lights, and very beneficial to Mankind: And

that in less than Twenty Years, of about Forty Ministers of Jesus Christ, who, at your desire, stood in *this very Place* where now I am, to do the Work you call me to this day, a * *third part* are silent in the Grave, and are able no more to assist you with their Advice or their Prayers. Thus we see that

1 Pet. 1. *all Flesh is Grass, and all the glory of Man as*
 24, 25. *the Flower of Grass, the Grass withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away; the best of Men must die, and the Prophets do not live for ever. But the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and the Work of God should not die in our Hands; tho' Iniquity doth still abound, our Love should not wax cold. And this is the word, which by the Gospel is preached to you; That if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him, He which converteth the Sinner from the Errour of his way, shall save his Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins.*

These I say are words of *the Gospel*, which proclaim Pardon to penitent Converts, and promise a gracious Reward to them that are converted, and those who are Instrumental in the Conversion of Sinners. And how Beautiful upon the Mountains should the Feet of them be that bring such glad Tidings as these, That Sinners may be converted from their Errours and Vices: That they are invited, commanded and encouraged to Repent,

Acts 17. *that now God commandeth all men every where*
 30. *to repent. That Sin may be pardoned, yea that a multitude of Sins may be covered, and blotted out, that God will abundantly Par-*

* The Reverend Mr. Burgess, Mr. Woodhouse, Mr. Sylvester, Mr. Shower, Mr. Howe, Dr. Williams, Mr. Alsop, Mr. Spademan, Mr. Fleming, Mr. Galpine, Mr. Picket, Mr. Henry and Mr. Coningham.

don,

don, or multiply Pardons, where Sin hath abounded, and Offences have been multiplied: *That if the wicked forsake his ways and the un-righteous man his thoughts, and return unto the Lord he will have mercy upon him, and to our God for he will abundantly pardon.* That if Sinners do repent and are converted, their Sins shall be blotted out. *Isa. 55. 7.* Is it not the voice of the Gospel which speaketh of the saving a Soul from Death? From that Death and Destruction, the Law threatned against every transgression, and which some Transgressors especially are in the most imminent danger of. It is Gospel Grace also by which alone the Endeavours of any Men to convert or save themselves or others, shall be either Successful or Acceptable. *Acts 3. 19.* This is the Gospel, That sure word of the Lord, That Comfortable and Encouraging word which abideth for ever, and is now preached unto you.

There is no Duty what ever more necessary nor advantageous than this, That an erroneous or vicious Man do repent of his Errours, and turn from his Evil Way: Nor is any Act of Charity or Love to our Neighbour more acceptable to God or Man, or through Grace rewardable than that which is propounded and encouraged in my Text, and which I hope is the great Design of those who belong to these Societys for the Reformation of Manners, Namely, the saving of their Souls from Death, who are in great danger by reason of Destructive Errours and Practices.

It is indeed a noble act of Charity, to save a Soul from Death, and it is our Duty, to endeavour and aim at this, and such a Duty as we cannot neglect without displeasing God, as well as being cruel to our Brother. It is more especially the Duty of those, who by reason of
4 their

their Office or Relation to them that are Erroneous and Vicious are under peculiar Obligations to this Work; or who by reason of Interest in their Affections, or Authority over their Persons, have greater Advantages to perform this Work with good Success; yet none are exempted from using their Endeavours, nor should any Persons excuse themselves. This appeareth from the Exhortations given, and the Encouragements propounded so generally in the sacred Scriptures, as in my Text, that he who converteth another, *Let him be who he will*, performeth an Act most beneficial to his Neighbour, and most acceptable to God.

It is the Duty of Christians in general, to
 1 Thess. 5. Warn them that are Unruly, to comfort the Feeble-
 14, 15. minded; to support the Weak, &c. All of us
 Heb. 12. should look diligently, lest any Man fail of the
 15. Grace of God. And take heed, lest any among
 Chap. 4. 1. us seem to come short of the promised Rest. We
 Chap. should consider one another to provoke unto Love
 10. 24. and to Good Works. And in short, We should not
 Phil. 2. 4. look every Man on his own Things, but every Man
 also on the Things of others. And next to the
 Welfare and Happiness of our own Souls,
 which in Subordination to the Glory of God,
 is our ultimate End, and should be our chief
 Care, nothing ought to be desired and aimed
 at by all of us, like the Salvation of the Souls
 of other Men. God forbid we should be of the
 Character or Temper of him, that said, even
 Gen. 4. 9. to God himself, *Am I my Brother's Keeper?*

Before I proceed to what I principally intend in this Discourse, let me answer one Objection; that lyeth obviously in the way, but is easily removed. Namely, Is not the Conversion of a Sinner, God's Work; and the

Salvation of his Soul, an Act of his Grace and Favour? How then can any Man convert and save himself? or how can one Man convert and save another? To which I answer: Tho' it is true, that God alone can convert, or save a Sinner; yet in order to this End, he is pleased to make use of Means and Instruments; and it is usual in Scripture to ascribe the Work of the Principal Efficient Cause, to the Means or Instrument. Thus, the Law of the Lord is said to *convert the Soul*; and the Ps. 19. 7. Word of God is said to be able to *save the Soul*. Jam. 1. 21 And Men like our selves are sent as Instruments to *open Mens Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of Sins, and an* Act. 26. *Inheritance among them that are Sanctified.* Ti- 18. *mothy is exhorted to be careful, that he might* 1 Tim. 4. 16. *save himself, and them that heard him.* And the Apostle Paul saith, He became all things to all Men, *that he might by all means save some.* And 1 Cor. 9. 22. private Christians, as well as Ministers of the Gospel, may be happy Instruments in this blessed Work; and therefore, saith the Apostle, *What knowest thou, O Wife, whether thou* 1 Cor. 7. 16. *shalt save thy Husband? or how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* So I may say, How know ye but that you may be Instruments in the Hand of God, to convert your erroneous and vicious Neighbour, Friend or Brother, and save his Soul from Death, and hide a multitude of Sins? And if you are Instruments only in this Work, as you can be no more, This will be your Honour and Happiness, you shall not fail of due Praise or Reward.

My present Discourse shall be contained under these Generals.

I. I will shew what sort of Sinners we should endeavour to save. Namely, the Erroneous and Vicious.

II. What Means or Methods we should use in order to this End and Purpose.

III. What Motives and Arguments are proper to excite and encourage our Endeavours in this Work. And,

IV. The Conclusion suitable to the particular Design of our present Assembly.

I. I am to shew, What sort of Sinners we should endeavour to convert and save. Namely, the Erroneous and Vicious.

Jude 20. We should not confine our Charitable Care and Concern for other Mens Salvation, only to those who are in the most imminent Danger; we ought to strengthen them that stand, as well as raise up them that are fallen; to confirm the Sound and Virtuous, as well as reclaim the Erroneous and Vicious: *To build up one another in our most holy Faith.* But special Care and Endeavours should be used towards them whose Souls are in the greatest Danger; *who have erred from the Truth*, and are walking in pernicious *Ways*, which lead down to the Chambers of Death, and take hold on Hell: Such especially we should endeavour to convert and save, who are guilty of Soul-destructive Errors in Judgment, or evil and vicious Practices in Life and Conversation. Consider therefore,

1. There are *Soul-destructive Errors* in Judgment. Otherwise we should never have been warned so often against Seducers, and False Prophets, and their False Doctrines, as we are in Scripture: Nor should we find so many Tit. 2. 7. Exhortations to *Uncorruptness in Doctrine*, and *Soundness in the Faith*; nor Cautions lest we are

are carried about with *divers and strange Doctrines*. If all Errors in Judgment or Opinion were such innocent things, as many in our Days would perswade themselves and others, Is it not strange we should read in Scripture of *Damnable Heresies* introduced by some who *deny the Lord that bought them, which bring upon Men swift Destruction? whose Words eat as doth a Canker*. Would the Church of Pergamos have been so severely reprimanded, because in her were found those *that held the Doctrine of Balaam, and of the Nicolaitans*, if it were of no Consequence what Opinion or Judgment Men were of in Doctrinal Matters? Or would the Apostle John have exhorted the Elect Lady, That if any came, and did not bring the Doctrine he taught, *not to receive such into her House, nor bid them God Speed?* I am fully perswaded, the loose Opinions many in our Days indulge, concerning the Doctrines of Religion, hath greatly tended to the Debaucheries in Life, and Corruption of Manners, so visible and deplorable among us. And I am confirmed in this Opinion, by what we find of the Heathen World, that because they became *vain in their Imaginations, and did not like to retain God in their Knowledge*, they were given up of God to a Reprobate Mind, and were filled with all Unrighteousness, &c. And when the Apostle is speaking of the Grand Apostacy under Antichrist, how memorable are his Words? *That because Men received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be Saved: For this cause God would send them strong Delusions, that they should believe a Lye: That they all might be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had Pleasure in Unrighteousness.*

When I speak of *Soul-destructive Errours*, I would not be thought to intend, that all Errours in Judgment, are equally dangerous: Some wrong Opinions, even in Matters of Religion, are so remote from the Foundation, and have so little Influence upon Mens Hearts and Lives, and relate to things more dubious, or not so clearly revealed as others, that comparatively speaking, they are innocent things. And again, some Men have so little Abilities of Mind, or such small Opportunities of being rightly informed, who yet have teachable Tempers, humble Minds, honest Hearts, and lead virtuous Lives, that their Errours or Mistakes, in some Points, it may be of considerable weight, will, I doubt not, obtain easy Pardon from God, for the Sake of Christ, who is ready to forgive; when other Men will be found greatly Criminal before God for their Errours in Judgment, and False Doctrines in Religion, which they themselves embrace, and delight to publish to others. For tho', 'tis true, that in some Sense we are passive in our assent to Speculative Doctrines that are propounded to us, and cannot believe what we will, nor help assenting to Propositions, according as they appear to the Eye of the Mind; yet as a Man may be guilty of willful Blindness, when he shuts his bodily Eyes; and of willful Deafness, when he stops his Ears; in like manner, I doubt not but many Persons are highly criminal, because they will not attend to the proper Evidences given for Truth, nor to the Arguments which are likely to persuade them out of their Infidelity; and because they do willingly indulge Pride and Prejudices in their Souls, and wallow in those Debaucheries of Conversation, which have a
natural

natural Tendency to darken their Minds, and lead them into the most dangerous and destructive Errors of Judgment; whereas memorable are the Words of our Blessed Saviour, *If any Man will do his Will, he shall know of the* John 7.
Doctrine whether it be of God. From whence 17.
 we may conclude, that a sincere desire and endeavour to do the will of God, will be our great Security against fatal Errors and Mistakes in the Doctrines of Religion; whereas the careless and irreligious Men is in great Danger either to reject that which comes from God as an Error, or to receive that which is not from God as a Truth, one way or other to be drawn into some dangerous Mistake, or at least to be tossed to and fro and Eph. 4. 14.
carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the sleight of Men and cunning Craftiness whereby they lay in wait to deceive.

2. There are *Soul-destructive Practices* in Life and Conversation; and these are very Numerous. Some think these are principally intended in my Text, which we should endeavour to reclaim or convert the Sinner from; and your Work as a Society for Reformation of Manners is chiefly concern'd about these, tho' I shall not insist so largely on them; because, alas! How manifest are these Works of the Flesh. These fleshly Lusts that War 1 Pet. 2.
against the Soul; these foolish and hurtful Lusts 11.
which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition, read the long and black Catalogue, Gal. 5. 19, 20, 21. Adultery, Fornication, Uncleaness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, 1 Tim. 6.
 Heresies, Envyings, Murthers, Drunkenness, 9.
 Revilings, and such-like, viz. All Sorts of Prophaneness and Debaucheries, Blasphemies
 and

and prophane Cursing and Swearing, Sabbath-Breaking, or Profanation of the Lord's-Day.

Thus it appeareth what sort of Sinners we should endeavour to convert and save.

II. Our next Enquiry is what Means or Methods we should use in Order to this End and Purpose.

In the general all proper and likely Means must be used, such as we find directed to in Scripture, or from Reason and Experience we may conclude will avail any Thing in order hereto, *e. g.* We must *teach and instruct the Ignorant*; some if you should ask them about their Knowledge and Faith in Divine Things,

Acts 8.31 may Answer you as the *Eunuch* did to St. Peter, *How can I know or believe the Truth, except some Man guide me?* The Apostle exhorts the *Colossians to teach one another*; and in his

Titus 2.3 Epistle to Titus, mentions *even Women that were Teachers of good Things*: Again, we shou'd endeavour to *convince the Erroneous*, and such as are *Gainfayers*. We shou'd Argue with them out of the Scriptures, and from Topicks of Reason, and shew the absurdity of their Errors, and endeavour to perswade their Minds of the Truth we desire them to Embrace, and to shew them how very false and pernicious their Mistakes are.

Again, We shou'd *excite and quicken* them we find remiss and negligent in their Duty, and in the Concerns of their Souls. *Solomon* tells us, *The Words of the Wise are as Goats*; by which we ought to stir up them that are careless and sluggish: Again, we should *admonish and reprove* them are guilty of Crimes and Offences. *We must warn the unruly*. This shou'd sometimes be done more privately, according to our Saviour's Direction, *To tell our Brother*

Eccles. 12
11.

1 Thes. 5
14.

Brother of his Fault between thee and him alone; Mat. 18. but if this will not avail, we must accuse him ^{15.} before others; sometimes to the Church, and in some Cases to the Magistrate, that such as *sin openly and obstinately may be rebuked before* 1 Tim. 5. all, *that others also may fear.* 20.

From what hath been said, you perceive how necessary the Direction is that we shou'd *consider one another,* and look diligently, taking the Inspection of one another as a Bishop or Shepherd over his Flock, in order to the saving each others Souls. And as the Apostle Jude directeth in Relation to this very Thing, *To make a Difference between Men and Men,* Jude 22, according to their different Crimes and Circumstances. 23.

According to their *different Crimes*; and we shall find some that are more properly the Objects of our Compassion; *On some, I say, have Compassion,* who it may be, like the young Men that follow'd Absalom, do follow Seducers *in the simplicity of their Hearts, and know* 2 Sam. *not any Thing*; or are only overtaken in a Fault; 15. 17. or it may be are wounded in their own Consciencies for what they have done; and like the Incestuous Corinthian, are in Danger of *being swallow'd up with overmuch Sorrow.* 2 Cor. 2. Such are Objects of great Pity and Compassion. 7. on, with such we should deal very tenderly and gently. But others we should *save with Fear,* or should attempt by rougher and severer Methods to excite and awaken their Fear; we should with greater Earnestness, as well as haste endeavour, if we can, to *pull them out of the Fire,* to save them from the Flames of Hell, who are just ready to fall into them. *Those that subvert whole Houses, teaching Things they ought not, must be rebuked sharply;* Titus 1. 11. 13. those

those that are impudent and obstinate, and yet secure in their Sins, must, if possible, *be put into Fear*. In order to this we should use all proper Methods; setting before them the *Terrors of the Lord*; telling them plainly, *How the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of Men*; and if they will not regard this, warn them fairly and frequently, that e're long the *Lord Jesus himself will be revealed from Heaven with his mighty Angels in flaming Fire, taking Vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel*. Tho' they should make a Jest of these Things, and scoff at the Promise of his coming, yet do you tell them, *The day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night*, and as feeble Things as such Words may sometimes be, Time hath been when a Prisoner at the Bar; reasoning of Righteousness, Temperance and Judgment to come, hath made a Judge upon the Bench to Tremble; and to this very day the Word of God is sometimes quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged Sword.

Rom. 1.
18.

2 Thes. 1.
7, 8, 9.

2 Pet. 3.
10.

Acts 24.
25.

I add, we should make a Difference as to Mens *different Circumstances* in this World, because due Regard being had to those our Attempts, are likely to be the more successful. I think we may learn this from the Example of *Nathan the Prophet*, who came not abruptly and hastily upon *David*, who was a Prince and his Sovereign, to reprove him for his Adultery and Murder, this had not been so likely a Method to have brought him to Conviction and Repentance, as that which he took, namely, to prepare the Way by an apt and affecting Parable, and then to say to him, *Thou art the Man*, 2 Sam. 12. To the same Purpose we should

should remember the Direction of *Timothy*, an Officer of the first Rank in the Church; *1 Ep. 5. 1, 2. Rebuke not an Elder, but intreat him as a Father, and the Elder Women as Mothers.*

But under this general, concerning the Means and Methods we should use, in order to convert and save the Souls of other Men, there are two we should most carefully regard.

1. That our Conversation be such as may credit Religion, and gain upon them that are Strangers or Enemies to it. We cannot be ignorant how many Precepts there are in the Gospel to this purpose: In that very Sermon of our Saviour upon the Mount, wherein he warneth his Disciples against the vain Ostentation of Hypocrites, in Praying and Fasting, and giving Alms, that they might be seen of Men; he giveth it in charge to his Followers, *That their Light should so shine before Men, that they might see their Good-works, and glorify their Father in Heaven.* How careful should we be to cut off Occasion from such as seek Occasion to speak reproachfully; that they may be ashamed who blame our good Conversation. Hear the earnest Exhortation of the Apostle *Peter, 1 Ep. 2. 11, 12. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as Strangers and Pilgrims; abstain from fleshly Lusts, which war against the Soul; having your Conversation honest among the Gentiles, that whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works which they shall behold, glorify God in the Day of Visitation.* It follows, Ver. 15: *For so is the Will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the Ignorance of foolish Men.* And it is very remarkable what the same Apostle intimateth in the beginning of the next Chapter; That some may be gained upon or converted

verted by the good Conversation of their Relatives and Acquaintance, who will not obey the Word, or be gained upon my means of that alone.

2. You must never fail to joyn your most earnest Prayers with your sincere Endeavours. The Reason of this is very obvious from what some are ready to object in order to excuse their Negligence: Namely, that to convert and save a Soul is God's Work. It is true, this is God's Work, therefore be earnest in Prayer to him, and desire that what you do in order thereto, at his Command, may be successful through his Blessing. And it may be if those of your Societies, and such as wish well to you had prayed more for Success in the good Work you are engaged in, there would not at this Time have been so much yet to be done, nor any Temptation to think the Case is desperate, the Disease incurable, and further Attempts towards the desired Reformation will be all in Vain. God forbid you should on this Account or any other be discourag'd: And therefore I proceed to the

III. Third General propounded; namely, To offer some Motives and Arguments to excite and encourage your Endeavours in this good Work.

And should we look no further than my Text, we may find strong Perswasives there. For let us *know it*, and consider it to animate our Desires and Endeavours, He which converteth the Sinner from the Error of his Way, *Shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins.* The Arguments here used, are grounded upon the Supposition of our Success
in

in our diligent Endeavours: And would the Holy Ghost have made such a *Supposition*, if the Thing were not *probable*? How then shou'd this excite our Zeal and Care? How shou'd we always abound in this Work, in hope that our Labour shall not be in Vain in the Lord. Upon the *Supposition* then of our Success in this Endeavour to convert and reform erroneous and vicious Men, some think the Apostle argueth from the vast Advantage that will redound to them that are converted, and to those that are Instrumental therein.

1. It is certain he mentions the Advantage (the vast Advantage) that will redound to him that is converted, *Thou hast saved a Soul from Death*; or, as our Saviour doth express it, *Thou hast gained thy Brother*. I incline to think the other Phrase *hiding a multitude of Sins*, referreth also to the same Thing, and intimateth that the sincere Convert shall have all his Sins pardoned, be they never so numerous, and so his Soul shall be saved. And who can think upon the Worth and Value of an Immortal Soul, and not esteem the Salvation, tho' but of one Soul, worth all his Cost and Pains. Our Blessed Saviour thought fit to come down from Heaven, and worth dying the Death of the Cross to save Souls, and hath told us plainly, one Soul is of more Value than all this World; shall not we therefore do all we can to save a Soul from Death? Let us consider what the Death of a Soul meaneth, and we shall see a further Argument in this Expression. This is no less than eternal Death and Misery, the loss of God's Presence and

Mat. 18.

15.

Mat. 16.

26.

Mark 9.
45.

and Favour, which is better than Life ; the Freedom from eternal Pains, not those of a refining Fire in Purgatory, but the consuming fire of Hell, *Where the Worm dieth not, and the fire is not quench'd.* It may further animate our Endeavours to think how near the Soul that is saved was to this everlasting Misery it is saved from ; how worthy of Death, because of the multitude of Sins it was guilty of, and how nigh to everlasting Misery : And further, if the Soul be saved from Death, it shall obtain eternal Life, and be happy in the blissful Enjoyment of God for ever and ever ; thus unspeakable is the Advantage true Converts will obtain.

Deut. 12.
3.

2. Those who are Instrumental in the Conversion and Salvation of Souls, shall have their Reward. This some think is declar'd in the last Words of my Text, and *shall hide a multitude of Sins.* ' That this great Charity of Converting any from the Error of his Way which is a Means of saving the Soul of the Converted alive, should be so acceptable in the sight of God and being added to his sincere Repentance for his Sins, how many soever he hath committed, should be effectual to the obtaining his Pardon through the Mercies of Christ under the Gospel. * The Promise is plain, that as they who are Wise shall shine as the brightness of the Firmament ; so they that turn many to Righteousness as the Stars for ever and ever. And we may safely conclude, God will not forget this Labour of Love, nor shall it lose its Reward. And under this Head, let me add,

* *Hammond in Luc.*

that

that tho' it is a great Honour, and will be a high Satisfaction and Pleasure, both here and hereafter to be *successful* Instruments in this blessed Work, yet our Acceptance with God, and Reward of Grace from his Hands dependeth not upon our Success, but on our Fidelity and Diligence. *Tho' Israel be not gather'd, yet such shall be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord our God.* Isa. 49. 4, 5.
If we should labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely our Judgment is with the Lord, and our Work with our God.

There are other Arguments to excite and encourage you, besides what I find in my Text: As,

1. Consider this is the noblest Instance of Love to our Neighbours: Nay, there can be no true Love and Friendship without this: We live in the Breach of one half of the Moral Law, whilst we neglect this Duty, and I fear the other half, namely, Love to God, is little regarded also: For saith the Apostle John, *If a Man say, I love God, and hateth his Brother, he is a Liar: For he that loveth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen.* John 4. 20. And will any Man pretend he loveth his Neighbour or Brother, and not endeavour to save his Soul from Death, especially when he seeth him running Headlong to Hell? Will he not so much as call after him, or use any Endeavour to stop him in his mad Career?

2. Consider you your selves were once in a lost and perishing Condition, tho' now thro' Grace you may be safe. And are you saved from Drowning, and will not you help to save others from Perishing? Cannot you remember
the

the Time when you were alienated from God? Yea, Enemies in your Minds to him, when you were under a Spirit of Bondage and Fear, because you perceiv'd yourselves Children of Wrath, and in the Gall of Bitterness, and Bond of Iniquity. How kind then was the Hand that helped you? How precious then were the Means of Grace to your Souls? How welcome the Tidings of Saviour, and the least glimmering of Light and Hope of Salvation? What a Value had you then for Souls? And are these Things quite forgotten now? Or can you have any Remembrance of them and not do all you can to save a Soul from Death?

3. Consider how active and diligent many are to destroy the Souls of Men. Let their cursed Zeal provoke your pious and charitable Zeal. How restless and unwearied is the malicious Devil in going *about as a Roaring Lyon, seeking whom he may devour?* And his Agents and Instruments are very laborious to destroy their own Souls, and the Souls of other Men. 'Tis amazing to consider how many stupid Wretches do not only frequently call upon God to damn their Souls, as if their Judgment lingered too long; but also take much Pains to ruin their Souls, who in the Language of the Prophet, *Draw Iniquity with Cords of Vanity, and Sin as it were with Cart-Ropes,* which can't be done without great Labour: And further, how they strive all they can to make others as bad as themselves, *compassing Sea and Land, as it were, to make Profelytes, and so render them twofold more the Children of Hell.*
- 1 Pet. 5. 8.
- Isa. 5. 18.
- Mat. 23. 15

4. Consider also, that heretofore, it may be you have been instrumental to endanger, if not

not destroy the Souls of other Men. I am sure we have all contributed to the Heap of Publick Guilt, which might bring down National Judgments, and therefore should readily contribute all we can towards a general Reformation. And who knoweth what Mischief we may have done to other Men, by our Examples, in some Particulars, by our unwary Walking, if not also by some evil Actions? Have we not all reason to pray for the Pardon of our *own*, and of *our other Mens Sins*? And should not this Consideration excite us to do all we can to promote the Welfare and Eternal Salvations of the Souls of other Men?

I could multiply Arguments, *e. g.* To do as you are now exhorted, is the only way to escape sharing in the Guilt of other Mens Sins; and will be a happy Sign that your Souls are in a saved Condition; and may be a Means to prevent Publick Judgments from being poured out upon our Native Land; and to procure Blessings upon our Selves and our Posterity. These Arguments have again and again been urged and insisted upon by those excellent Persons who, at your Desire, have preached to you for many Years together. Therefore,

IV. To conclude this Discourse in such a manner as is suitable to the Design of it. Give me leave to address my self, with Seriousness and Earnestness, To you that are Members of the Societies for Reformation of Manners; and then to all others.

1. You that are Members of the Societies for Reformation of Manners, will, I hope, suffer

suffer the Word of Exhortation, namely, To aim at the Salvation of their Souls whose evil *Manners* you endeavour to *Reform*. In particular, by joining Instruction with Correction, as you have Opportunity, following all your Endeavours with earnest Prayer; being careful, above all things, that you your selves *are harmless and blameless as the Children of God, without Rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World.* And also, be exhorted not to be weary or faint in your Minds. Content not yourselves with these Religious Assemblies, but revive and attend your Friendly Meetings together for mutual Advice and Assistance, as you have formerly done, and which I fear have been much neglected of late. And when I consider I am speaking to them that know the Value and Necessity of friendly Reproof, I perswade my self you would not be offended if I should duly and sharply reprove some for their Remissness and Negligence in the great Duty insisted on in the foregoing Discourse. But I hope Conscience will do that in a better manner than I can, and that some will now say, *I remember my Faults this Day.* Give me leave to expostulate a little with you. Are these Cities of *London* and *Westminster* wholly reformed, and your Societies therefore have no more Work to do? Doth Iniquity hide its Head, and stop its Mouth? Is the Wickedness of the Wicked come to an end? Or is Sin and Wickedness, Vice and Debauchery, become a tame and harmless Thing? If none of these Things are so, why then are some so cold and remiss, who once were warm and zealous? Where is that Blessedness which
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once you spake of? Where is the Zeal that was once conspicuous in some that are gone, and which once glowed so warmly in some of your Breasts? As your Zeal once inflamed others in many Parts of the Nation, so I fear a failure of Life and Spirits in the Capital of the Kingdom, hath caused a Faintness and Coldness for this Work throughout the Land. You did run well, *who* or *what* hath hindered you? or are not several of your Hindrances removed? It was not to be wondered at, That when Riots and Tumults were encouraged or connived at by them, who ought to have suppressed 'em, and the lewdest and vilest of Men were countenanced in the most profane and irreligious Outrages, that your Hearts should be discouraged, and your Hands be weakned. But, blessed be our God, now 'tis otherwise; therefore renew your former Attempts, with redoubled Zeal and Vigour. Up and be doing, and the Lord our God shall be with you.

2. Let me perswade all others, if they will not join themselves to your Societies, yet to give you all the Encouragement and Assistance that is proper otherwise; I could easily shew how much it is the Duty and Interest of Magistrates to encourage you, for the promoting the Publick Welfare, which they ought so much to be concerned for; and because you are so helpful to them in doing that which is necessary to be done, that *Magistracy* it self may not be an useless Thing in the World, and *Magistrates* be despised here, and condemned hereafter.

Those that are not Magistrates, nor yet of your Societies, ought certainly to wish well

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to your noble Design. But good Wishes and good Words alone, are not sufficient. Formerly there have been, and I hope there will again be, those who shall shew their Goodwill to you in another manner. If any should object, and say, They fear the Methods taken by these Societies will not convert Sinners, and save Souls, for then they would readily contribute all they could to their Support and Encouragement. I reply, That it must be acknowledged, temporal Punishments are not proper Arguments to convince the Judgment of Error; nor yet are these alone sufficient to reclaim or convert Men from vicious Habits and Practices; yet there is reason to think *Manasseth* is not the only Instance of the good Effect of Afflictions and Punishment, who

^{2 Chron.} when he was taken among the Thorns, and bound
^{33. 11, 12.} with Fetters, besought the Lord, and humbled himself greatly. And the Wise Man tells us, that the Rod and Reproof give Wisdom. And in some cases it may hold good with respect to those that are grown up, what is said concerning the Correction of Children. *Prov. 23. 13, 14, Withhold not Correction from the Child, for if thou beatest him with the Rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the Rod, and shalt deliver his Soul from Hell.* I heartily wish that those who dislike the Methods taken by these Societies for Reformation, would find out, and practise any that are better, or any other that are so good. And supposing after all that Sinners should not be converted and saved this way, yet will not some Enormities be prevented or restrained? Will not many be terrified, who are not yet engaged in the most vicious and destructive Courses? Will not a Publick Testimony

timony be given against that which otherwise is the Reproach, and in all likelihood will prove the Ruin of any Kingdom or Nation? If therefore you have any love to Souls; any desire after the Publick Welfare; any concern for your Dear Country and Children; any zeal for the Glory and Honour of God; if there be any Virtue, any Praise, think on these things. And to conclude as I began, *Brethren, if any of you do err from the Truth, and one convert him, let him know, (Let him consider) that he which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, shall save a Soul from Death, and shall hide a multitude of Sins.*

F I N I S.

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